

Message Text

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64

ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7534

INFO AMEMBASSY TOKYO

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 12826

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, UR

SUBJ: ILLNESS OF KOSYGIN

REF: STATE 199057 (NOTAL)

1. MAKOTO SANO, CHIEF OF MAINICHI'S MOSCOW BUREAU, CONFIRMED REPORT OF PREMIER KOSYGIN'S BEING ILL IN DETAIL TO EMBOFFS ON AUGUST 12. ACCORDING TO SANO, MEETING WITH KOSYGIN WAS DEFINITELY ON SCHEDULE FOR VISITING MISSION FROM JAPANESE FEDERATION OF ECONOMIC ORGANIZATIONS (KEIDANREN) BUT WAS CANCELLED. MISSION IS NOW SCHEDULED TO MEET BREZHNEV IN YALTA TODAY, FRIDAY, AUGUST 13. SANO VIEWS MEETING WITH BREZHNEV AS A SUBSTITUTE FOR THE CANCELLED MEETING WITH KOSYGIN, WHOM A FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIAL HAD DESCRIBED AS "RESTING OUTSIDE MOSCOW" BECAUSE HE "HAD A SLIGHT COLD."

2. JAPANESE EMBASSY COUNSELLOR AKIHO WAS RETICENT WHEN ASKED ABOUT REPORT OF KOSYGIN ILLNESS. HE WOULD SAY ONLY "I CANNOT SAY IT IS TRUE," A STATEMENT WHICH LEFT THE CLEAR IMPRESSION ON SEVERAL OF HIS LISTENERS THAT THE REPORT MIGHT WELL BE TRUE BUT AKIHO WAS NOT AT LIBERTY TO SAY SO.

3. AS IT IS SOMEWHAT UNUSUAL FOR BREZHNEV TO MEET WITH A VISITING GROUP SUCH AS KEIDANREN, WE ARE INCLINED TO THINK THAT IT WAS ARRANGED AS A SUBSTITUTE FOR A MEETING WITH KOSYGIN, WITH WHOM IT WOULD HAVE BEEN NORMAL FOR THE GROUP TO MEET. THUS WE ALSO GIVE CREDENCE TO THE IDEA THAT KOSYGIN IS ILL.

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